



*Flo Harvey*

Hi. I am Flo Harvey. My husband Mike and I have six wonderful, talented biological children, and in the last two years we have adopted two first cousins, making them brother and sister numbers 7 and 8. We are a busy household, very active at Northridge Friends in Wichita, and homeschooling all but our adopted special needs son. Our oldest graduated *cum laude* from Wichita State University last year, and was married this June. Three children are currently attending a local community college.

By trade, I am an FTD® Certified Master Floral Designer. For over 30 years, I have been privileged to make bouquets for almost every occasion you can name. “Building” bouquets comes naturally after all these years, but many observers ask how I know where and in what form to place each stem. There are basic rules of form, balance, color and function that a designer follows. In doing so, the sky is the limit to what masterpieces you can create.

As I have pondered the creativity that flows out of following these floral designing guidelines, God has shown me some similarities in how he creates his “masterpieces” that he calls his children—us. This week we will look at some of these principles and discover a little about how we are “knit together” as his greatest masterpieces. Moreover, we’ll think about how each of us can design every day so we may look more and more like the one true Master Designer.

*BIBLE READING: 2 Timothy 2:20-21*

When asked to design a floral arrangement, one of the first things we prepare is the vessel in which we will build the bouquet. The size, color, and type of container is important as it is the foundation for the “structure” that it will hold to support the arrangement. We then fill the vessel with the appropriate holding medium, such as marbles, crushed styro-foam, or Oasis floral foam that will secure the stems when we insert them. If the wrong vessel or holding medium is used, the whole bouquet can fall apart.

If we think of ourselves as the vessels God is using to create his “masterpieces,” the same principles are at work. God cannot “build” or make us into his creation/his likeness unless we are placing into our “vessels” things that can securely hold those good things he gives us, as he builds a strong foundation.

The first holding medium required would be the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. That enables us to cling to all of the things that “will be added unto you.” If that ingredient isn’t present, “the builder builds in vain” (Psalm 127:1a). Whatever is designed will soon collapse under its own weight.

If you have not accepted Christ as your personal Savior, please seek a relationship with a body of true believers who will walk alongside you as you investigate Jesus and what it means to be his disciple. It is the greatest adventure you could ever undertake, and it is the firm foundation of a beautiful new creation—you!

*SONG: I Have Decided to Follow Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father God, as a vessel of your making, please fill my life with the gift of your salvation and eternity with you.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Revelation 22:17*

After the holding medium has been chosen and placed inside the chosen vessel, it is critical for life-giving water to be added. At my workplace, not only the water needed for maintaining the blooms, but also liquid flower “food” is pumped simultaneously with the water through a hose at every designer’s station. This food/water mix gives every design longevity. Water, and if possible, flower food should be added daily to keep the flowers fresher for a longer period.

The same principles of constant fresh water and food applies to our physical and spiritual lives. We need the life-giving “water” of God’s Word daily poured into our “vessels.” Spending time daily in reading, listening to, studying, memorizing, or singing the Scriptures is imperative to a Spirit-filled, fruit-bearing life. It nourishes our souls and fills to overflowing those who thirst for life eternal, making our light shine before men that they may see Christ reflected in us.

If we don’t tend our “vessels” by repeatedly “watering” ourselves in the Scriptures, whatever God places in our lives will never bloom and grow. Instead of thriving, it will dry up, wilt and eventually die, ready for the trash pile. We would be unable to work in the way he has purposed for us. In no time, we would end up a mess, dried out and colorless instead of a lush green and colorful “masterpiece” fit for his leading or his coming kingdom.

*SONG: Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, help us to pour your Word into our hearts and minds, that we might bloom and grow for you.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Colossians 4:2*

When the chosen vessel is filled with the holding medium and water has been added, the designer then begins to build a framework for the bouquet. Oftentimes, that will include various kinds of non-blooming plant materials like foliage, moss, and branches. These will eventually help determine the height, length, and width of the arrangement. It also aids in forming the shape and feel of the design. It is the “skeleton” on which the rest of the floral body is placed.

In our human vessels, the framework or skeleton of who we will become in Christ is built on our prayer life. We can be saved and forgiven from our sins, and read the Scriptures—things that are foundational—but prayer is the key ingredient in a vibrant relationship with Christ as he builds the “bones” of who we will become in him.

To many, prayer is a scary thing, but it is simply having a conversation with our Creator. He already knows what we are going to say, but his desire is for us to come to him with our cares, praises and plans; recognizing him as the Lord of our lives. He loves us and wants us to grow and blossom under his watchful care and pruning. By taking the time to talk with him every day, we enable him to nurture unimaginable spiritual growth in us.

As we pray/communicate with God, he is able to build structure in our human vessels that can withstand the stresses and strains of this earthly life: a framework that bends with the stormy gales, but is never broken by it.

*SONG: Sweet Hour of Prayer*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, teach us to pray as we ought that we might know you more and more.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Micah 6:8*

Once the vessel is chosen, the holding medium is in place, food and water are present, and the “framework” of foliage is in place, the real fun of designing begins. Now the larger focal flowers are inserted, giving the bouquet its ebb and flow. They are the spotlight of the arrangement, drawing your eyes to the unique color, line, texture, or curve of the arrangement. These blooms are that special something that appeals to your senses, prompts an emotion or is visually joyful.

In God’s design of our human “bouquets,” our focal points are our character qualities: honesty, integrity, compassion, consistency, dependability, diligence, discretion, mercy, forgiveness, generosity, justice, loyalty, servanthood, and trustworthiness, to name a few....

Each of these Christ-like character qualities not only draw others into our lives, but they attract the attention of a broken world crying out for something to believe in. Seeing that we have something and someone to believe in will draw them to the Savior they need. We have something different, genuine and sound. As Christians, we should look different from the world, offering a pleasing aroma and a ray of hope. A ray of hope that is a striking contrast to what they see in their dealings with the dead, colorless darkness of the world.

Just as the colorful blooms in a floral arrangement draw our eyes to the beauty of the completed project, the focal points in our lives should spotlight our love for God—abundant and overflowing from our vessels, drawing everyone to him.

*SONG: They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Oh gracious God, cultivate your character qualities in us that we might sow your love into others.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Galatians 5:22-23*

When the focal flowers have been placed in the holding medium, supported by the framework of the foliage, we next add the smaller complementary blooms. They are somewhat smaller than the focal flowers but don't take the eye away as they also have a similar hue, form, and feel as the focal flowers. Their main job is to fill open spaces and point our vision back to the focal flowers, accentuating and embellishing their beauty and purpose in the arrangement. These blooms also begin to fill in the lesser but necessary details of the bouquet to complete what will become our floral masterpiece.

In our human vessels, as we allow God to assemble our lives as he desires, the fruit of the Spirit become our complementary blooms. Expressed alongside our godly character traits, these attributes highlight and complement them. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control illuminate honesty, integrity, diligence, mercy, loyalty, generosity, etc. making them more becoming and full as we live our our lives in Christ.

These "blooms" fill in a Christ-centered life and develop more completely from time spent in prayer and communion with the Father. As we pray, study, and practice living out his Word, the fruit will be highlighted, bloom profusely and fill our earthly vessels to overflowing. Christ, living in us, will be illuminated for the whole world to see. That is true abundant beauty.

*SONG: Fairest Lord Jesus*

*PRAAYER SUGGESTION: Heavenly Father, please bestow on us the good fruit of a life centered on you.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Galatians 6:10*

Our “bouquets” are nearly complete! The vessels are filled with a holding medium, life-giving food and water, a foundation of foliage, focal flowers, and complementary blooms. Only a step or two remain to complete our masterpiece.

One step is the possible addition of a “filler” flower. Not every bouquet requires this step. It is mostly used when an arrangement appears to be lacking or in need of a little “extra something” to pull it all together. It is usually a small flower, something that does not distract from the overall look but serves to fill in a gap. Baby’s breath, statice, solidago are examples of these filler flowers.

I would say that our human filler flower might well be our acts of loving service to others. Giving of our time, money, and talents by serving others not only fills a gap of need for the recipient of the service, but it almost always ends up being a blessing to us as the giver. It is that little extra act of stepping out and sacrificing for others that creates beauty all around. Needs are met, relationships are built, hurts are healed, and bonds are formed that might never have been without those acts of kindness. Service is a gift of love that touches each of us deeply and can give hope to the most hardened heart.

Serving transforms, creating beauty that permeates all aspects of our lives. It is subtle but so powerful, becoming that “little extra” something that changes the world and makes an outstanding masterpiece!

*SONG: Make Me a Blessing*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Father God, help me to remember to serve others each and every day. Make me a blessing.*

—Flo Harvey

*BIBLE READING: Luke 10:2*

Our floral masterpiece is now complete. Depending on the occasion, we might tuck in an artificial butterfly, some cat-tails, or a stem of curly willow for a final accent, but essentially, the bouquet is finished and ready to go out for delivery. We put a card with the name and address of the recipient on it and take it to the delivery shelf.

When it reaches the intended destination, our arrangement will then serve its designed purpose. It will comfort the mourner, cheer the invalid, celebrate a birthday. The care and love put into the bouquet by the designer and the person giving it is transported by the arrangement to the recipient.

Our human bouquets need to serve their designed purpose as well. Each of us has unique “blossoms” integrated into our heavenly design that are intended for us to use for God’s glory. We are ready now to go out on “delivery” and serve in the ways that God has designed and equipped us to serve. Our name cards will read the same as every born-again believer: “a sinner saved by grace.”

Our Father in Heaven fearfully and wonderfully made each of us in his image to reflect his love and light to the world around us. We should go into the world trusting him and serving others. It is your purpose as a vessel of his design for “He makes all things beautiful,” and you are his masterpiece!

*SONG: Here I Am, Lord*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, may we be obedient to go out into the world and love others with the love you have bestowed on us.*

—Flo Harvey